

## CURTAIN RAISER TO 2019 ELECTIONS: THE MANY UNTOLD FACETS!

Issue No. 02, FY20  
Date: 08 April 2019

As India goes to polls beginning April 11, with an estimated 90 crore electorate (more than the combined population of Europe) we summarise the many untold facets.

*First*, India does fairly well in terms of voter turnout (66.4% in 2014), when compared with other countries. *Second*, the gap between male and female voters has progressively declined over the years and the gap had almost closed in 2014. Extrapolating assembly election voting patterns in states post 2014, we believe such high female turnout rate in elections might continue in 2019 also with increasing women empowerment. One proxy for such increasing women empowerment is the number of accounts that have been opened through Jan Dhan and Mudra schemes. States like Madhya Pradesh, where both Mudra & Jan Dhan accounts have been opened in very large numbers, have seen an increase of women turnout rate by 18% in state assembly polls compared to 2014 elections.

*Third* is the issue of women not registering themselves as voters. Comparing Census and Election Commission data we estimate that there might have been 1.24 crore missing women electorate at the time of 2014 elections in 10 states only. We believe all the stake holders should encourage, facilitate and promote women to get themselves registered as voters.

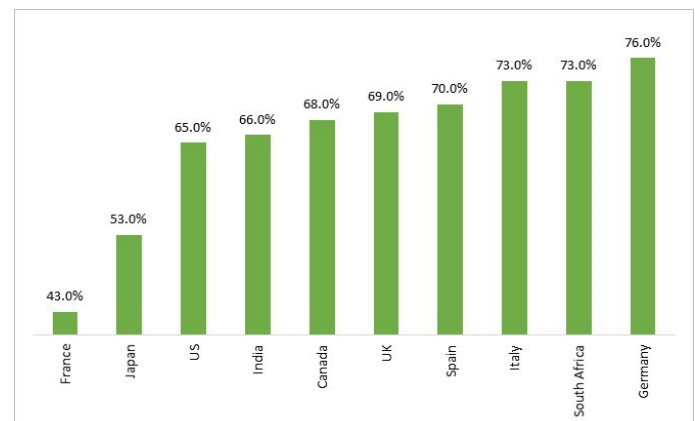
*Fourth*, the impact of socio political factors on voting. We find that mostly southern states (Kerala, AP, Tamil Nadu) and Northern states which have been home to agricultural revolution (Haryana & Punjab) have more conscious voters. Interestingly, voting patterns may be literacy agnostic.

*Fifth*, migration impacts voting. Our estimates of net migration once mapped with the voter turnout indicates states like UP, Bihar, Odisha, Rajasthan & J&K have net "out migration" and consequently low voter turnout rate. Steps might be initiated to bring this growing chunk of electorate back to the voting process by making suitable changes in the existing electoral regulations. This can be made effective by rigorously linking the Aadhar card with Voter Identity Card and implementing a system of Absentee Voting Procedure like in the US!

### GENERAL ELECTION 2019

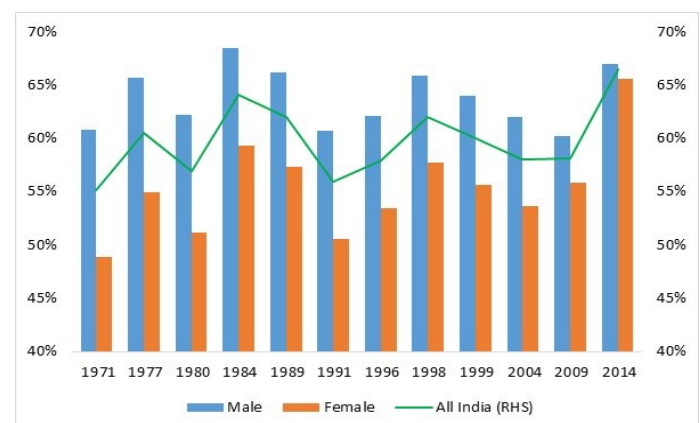
- ◆ The world's largest democracy with around 90 crore electorates (more than the combined population of Europe) is set to elect its 543 members for the 17th Lok Sabha in 7-phases from 11 April to 19 May 2019. With such a large electorate, the Indian elections have always posed great challenge for everyone to decode the factors both big & small, impacting the voting pattern. India's geographical as well as demographical vastness & diversity makes any analysis much more challenging. Against this background, it will be interesting to link India's elections with social and economic aspects.
- ◆ First, how does India stack up in comparison to voting patterns around the world? Voter turnout data published by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) indicates that, as per the most recent national parliamentary elections for major countries, France recorded the lowest turnout percentage (43%) while Germany has the highest (76%). On this parameter, India is also doing fairly well as voter turnout rate has improved significantly to 66.4% in 2014, as compared to 58.2% in 2009. The 2014 voting percentage was the highest since 1984.
- ◆ As per male and female voter turnout rates, the gap has declined significantly in 2014 and has been declining from 1991, when the gap was more than 10%. The gap that was stagnant at around 8.4% on an average for 4 elections between 1996 and 2004. This declined to more than half in 2009 and almost closed in 2014. Extrapolating assembly election voting patterns in states post 2014, we believe such high female turnout in elections might continue in 2019 also with increasing women empowerment.

Graph 1: Voter Turnout Rate among major EMDEs (%)



Source: IDEA, SBI Research

Graph 2: Male & Female Voter Turnout Rate in India (%)



Source: SBI Research

**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND WOMEN TURNOUT RATE**

- ◆ If we look at the voter turnout rate among 28 major States from the 1971 parliamentary election to 2014 elections, the women turnout was almost similar in the states of Kerala, WB and Tripura. The States which are lagging in voter turnout rate are the ones where females have traditionally not been actively involved electorally for e.g., in Bihar, UP, MP, Maharashtra & J&K.
- ◆ However, this is changing. For example, one proxy for increasing women empowerment is the number of accounts which have been opened through Jan Dhan and Mudra schemes. There is now increasing evidence that Jan Dhan accounts are acting as a vehicle for remittances apart from others that is resulting in more and more women taking independent decisions. We estimated the state-wise women PMJDY & Mudra accounts by taking the national women % share, which is 73.6% for MUDRA and 53% for PMJDY. The results in the adjacent table are quite interesting and encouraging. In all the 10 States, women turnout rate, in the subsequent Assembly elections, has improved significantly (by an average of 10%) as compared to 2014 LS general elections. States like Madhya Pradesh, where both Mudra & Jan Dhan accounts have been opened in very large numbers, has seen an increase of women turnout rate by 18%. This indicates that women empowerment has led to increase in the women voting turnout percentage. Are we witnessing a more empowered India then?

Women Voter Turnout vis-à-vis PMJDY & Mudra					
State	Year of Assembly Election	LS Women Turnout (2014)	Assembly Women Turnout	Women PMJDY A/Cs (in Lakh)	Women MUDRA A/Cs (in Lakh)
Chhattisgarh	2018	68.1%	76.3%	74	18
Goa	2017	78.9%	83.9%	1	1
Gujarat	2017	59.4%	66.1%	73	27
Himachal Pradesh	2017	65.4%	77.9%	6	2
Karnataka	2018	65.8%	71.5%	74	95
Madhya Pradesh	2018	56.6%	74.0%	162	60
Punjab	2017	70.9%	77.9%	35	16
Rajasthan	2018	61.1%	74.7%	132	30
Uttar Pradesh	2017	57.4%	63.3%	290	82
Uttarakhand	2017	62.6%	68.7%	13	7

Source: SBI Research

**HOWEVER MISSING WOMEN ELECTORATE MIGHT BE A CONCERN**

- ◆ However, there is a point of concern. Comparing Census and Election commission data we estimated that there might have been 1.24 crore missing women electorate at the time of 2014 elections in 10 states only. We define missing women as one who are eligible to vote but are not yet registered themselves as voters. This is alarming since it means that approximately 1.24 crore women may not have exercised their constitutional right to vote in their state of domicile.
- ◆ So to improve the women turnout rate in India, all stake holders, starting from the Central Government, the Election Commission of India, the media as well as the civic society should encourage, facilitate and promote women to get themselves registered as voters.

Missing Women Electors?	
State	in lakh
West Bengal	22.2
Maharashtra	19.7
Rajasthan	14.7
Gujarat	14.1
Assam	11.7
Haryana	10.8
Kerala	9.4
Odisha	8.5
Punjab	6.4
Jharkhand	6.3
<b>Total (Top 10)</b>	<b>123.9</b>

Source: Census 2011, Election Commission, SBI Research

**ARE 543 SEATS ENOUGH TO REPRESENT 130 CRORE POPULATION?**

- ◆ Since only 543 Lok Sabha constituencies represent 130 crore people in the country, it is time to take a look at the legal provisions on delimitation of parliamentary constituencies (till 2026) with a view to increase their number. This is crucial in order to rationalize population per seat (to properly cater to the needs of people and constituency) which is currently at 15.6 lakh per LS constituency. Even in the smaller countries like UK, Germany Italy France, etc., the number of elected representatives is higher than the strength of the Lok Sabha in India.

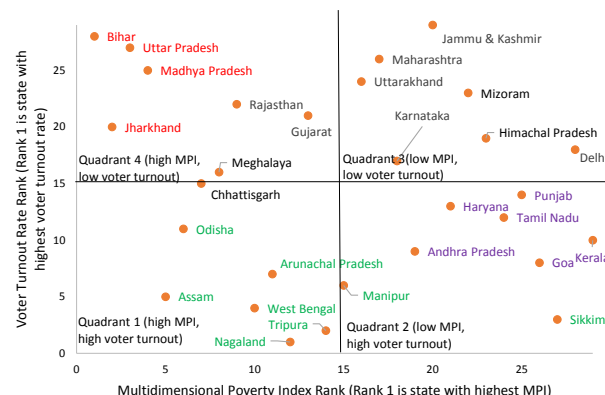
Seats in Lower House: India vis-à-vis Other Economies		
Country	Seats in Lower House	Population per Seat (in '000)
Germany	709	104
UK	650	44
Italy	630	65
France	577	72
Indonesia	560	366
Ethiopia	547	148
<b>India</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>1565</b>
Brazil	513	341
Thailand	500	104
Mexico	500	192
Congo	500	127

Source: SBI Research

**DO SOCIAL INDICATORS INFLUENCE VOTING PATTERNS?**

- ◆ Of equal importance and hitherto unexplored in Indian elections are the socio-political factors like, population size, age, educational attainment, political interest and economic backwardness. We believe that these factors play a major role and over the years have been the major driving factors behind voter turnout rates.
- ◆ The Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) by Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative assigns values to Indian states based on deprivations that each person faced with respect to education, health and living standards. We ranked the states on the basis of MPI (states with highest MPI ranked as 1) and compared with rank assigned to states on the basis of voter turnout rate (with 1st rank assigned to state with highest voter turnout rate), and found out interesting patterns.

**Graph 3: Voter Turnout Rate and State of Deprivation**



Source: Election Commission, OPHI, SBI Research

- ◆ Certain northern states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand, with higher MPI have lower voter turnout. Interestingly, these states have low literacy (women) and per capita incomes. Further, most of the North-East and Eastern states have higher turnout rates and varied levels of poverty. However states including Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Haryana and Punjab, have high voter turnout rate and lower level of deprivation. These states have higher per capita incomes than the national average and higher literacy (though Andhra Pradesh and Haryana have lower women literacy). Thus voting patterns may be literacy agnostic.
- ◆ Mostly southern states and northern states which have been home to agricultural revolution have more conscious voters.

**HOW DOES MIGRATION IMPACT VOTING PATTERNS?**

- ◆ In addition to this, another important aspect which leads to low turnout is inter state and intra-state migration of both male and female. Over the years, mostly male population have been migrating from one state to another due to various reasons like looking for better quality of life, employment, marriage and education which impact the overall voter turnout rate. Our estimates of net migration (in migration - out migration), once mapped with the percentage of voter turnout among major States, show states like UP, Bihar, Odisha, Rajasthan & J&K have net “out migration” and, consequently low voter turnout rate.
- ◆ Additionally, the upwardly mobile youth population which moves out of its place of domicile in search of better job opportunities, also needs more focus. Steps might be initiated to bring this growing chunk of electorate back to the voting process by making suitable changes in the existing electoral regulations. We believe this can be made effective by rigorously linking the Aadhar Card with Voter Identity Card and introduce a system of Absentee Voting Procedure like in US!
- ◆ For example, in US if one stays overseas, he is still eligible to vote through the *FVAP.gov*. For such, one needs to print, sign and mail in a form to local elections office where he is registered in the U.S, *at least* 30 days in advance of the general election. The person has option to get an electronic ballot (online) or a blank paper ballot in the mail. This is called an Absentee Voting Procedure.

Voting Patterns in 16th LS Poll 2014 Vs Other Socio-economic Parameters							
Major States/Uts	No of Seats	Turnout Rate (%)	Women Turnout Rate (%)	Elder Population (Above 65) (Share, %)	Total Literacy (%)	Women Literacy (%)	Percapita Income (Rs Lakh)
Andhra Pradesh	42	74.6	74.1	4.5	67.7	59.7	1.42
Assam	14	80.1	79.4	3.7	73.2	67.3	0.74
Bihar	40	56.3	57.7	4.1	63.8	53.3	0.39
Chhattisgarh	11	69.4	68.1	4.5	71.0	60.6	0.92
Delhi	7	65.1	63.8	4.0	86.3	80.9	3.29
Goa	2	77.1	78.9	7.0	87.4	81.8	4.22
Gujarat	26	63.7	59.4	4.3	79.3	70.7	1.76
Haryana	10	71.4	69.7	5.2	76.6	66.8	2.00
Himachal Pradesh	4	64.5	65.4	6.1	83.8	76.6	1.61
J & K	6	49.7	48.3	4.8	68.7	58.0	0.83
Jharkhand	14	63.8	63.5	3.5	67.6	56.2	0.64
Karnataka	28	67.2	65.8	4.8	75.6	68.1	1.82
Kerala	20	73.9	73.7	7.2	93.9	92.0	1.81
Madhya Pradesh	29	61.6	56.6	4.5	70.6	60.0	0.89
Maharashtra	48	60.3	58.0	5.9	82.9	75.5	1.81
Odisha	21	73.8	74.5	5.3	73.5	64.4	0.81
Punjab	13	70.6	70.9	6.2	76.7	71.3	1.40
Rajasthan	25	63.1	61.1	4.3	67.1	52.7	1.01
Tamil Nadu	39	73.7	73.8	5.5	80.3	73.9	1.67
Uttar Pradesh	80	58.4	57.4	4.4	69.7	59.3	0.55
Uttarakhand	5	61.7	62.6	5.7	79.6	70.7	1.74
West Bengal	42	82.2	82.0	4.7	77.1	71.2	0.96
NE States	11	79.0	78.7	3.9	80.6	76.0	1.34
All India	543	66.4	65.5	5.5	74.0	65.5	1.13

Source: SBI Research

Migration vs Voting Turnout						
State	NM	VT	NM	VT	NM	VT
	Census, 1991-01	NSS, 2007-08	Census, 2001-11	1999	2009	2014
Andhra Pradesh	-0.3	69.1	-0.9	72.6	-2.0	74.6
Assam	-0.7	71.3	-0.5	69.5	-2.2	80.1
Bihar	-2.7	61.5	-5.6	44.5	-3.4	56.3
Gujarat	1.7	47.0	1.6	47.9	1.6	63.7
Haryana	4.1	63.7	3.5	67.5	2.0	71.5
Himachal Pradesh	1.0	56.8	-	58.4	-0.4	64.4
J & K	-0.4	32.3	-1.2	39.7	0.4	49.7
Karnataka	0.3	67.6	1.0	58.8	1.7	67.2
Madhya Pradesh	0.0	54.9	-0.7	51.2	0.5	61.6
Maharashtra	3.0	61.0	4.1	50.7	2.7	60.3
Odisha	-0.7	55.6	-1.3	65.3	-0.6	73.8
Punjab	1.7	56.1	1.3	69.8	0.8	70.6
Rajasthan	-0.6	53.9	-0.9	48.4	-1.3	63.1
Tamil Nadu	-0.7	58.0	-1.4	73.0	4.9	73.7
Uttar Pradesh	-2.0	53.5	-3.1	47.8	-1.9	58.4
West Bengal	0.4	75.1	1.3	81.4	-0.5	82.2

Source: Census, Mistri A (2015), SBI Research, NM: Net Migration, VT: Voting Turnout

\*\*\*\*\*

**Disclaimer:** The Ecowrap is not a priced publication of the Bank. The opinion expressed is of Research Team and not necessarily reflect those of the Bank or its subsidiaries. The contents can be reproduced with proper acknowledgement. The write-up on Economic & Financial Developments is based on information & data procured from various sources and no responsibility is accepted for the accuracy of facts and figures. The Bank or the Research Team assumes no liability if any person or entity relies on views, opinion or facts & figures finding in Ecowrap.

**Contact Details:**

Dr. Soumya Kanti Ghosh  
 Group Chief Economic Adviser  
 State Bank of India, Corporate Centre  
 M C Road, Nariman Point  
 Mumbai - 400021  
 Email: soumya.ghosh@sbi.co.in  
 gcea.erd@sbi.co.in  
 Phone: 022-22742440  
 @kantisoumya